

CHAPTER XI

POLITICAL

FROM every point of view, the years between 1919 and 1924 are of cardinal significance in the life of the partners. They were, of course, actively concerned in public affairs; he, in particular, more prominently so than at any time since the Education Act controversy they also published a whole series of highly important books. The affairs and the books are alike political in reference; that is, the first great change registered. They are not only political; they are, in a broad sense, party-political; they represent the fact that the Webbs, who had striven from 1909 to 1912, with a very large measure of success, to get a great non-party organisation into being, had by now definitely, publicly, and with all that the gesture could have of meaning, ranged themselves with the Labour party, as a party of action, and were prepared to take their share in its action.

The books of this period are *A Constitution for the British Socialist Commonwealth*, published in 1920; *The Consumers**

Co-operative Movement, published in 1922, and *The Decay of Capitalist Civilisation*, published in 1923; *Statutory Authorities for Special Purposes* was also published in

1922, as was another volume in their Local Government series, that dealing with Prisons, but in regard to these last two, publication had been held over owing to the war, the

characteristic works of the period are the other three, and especially the *Constitution* and *The Decay of Consumers' Co-operation* also, formally, belongs to the Local

Government series, both in its political reference
—especially